Newsletter for Birdwatchers 1960-2010
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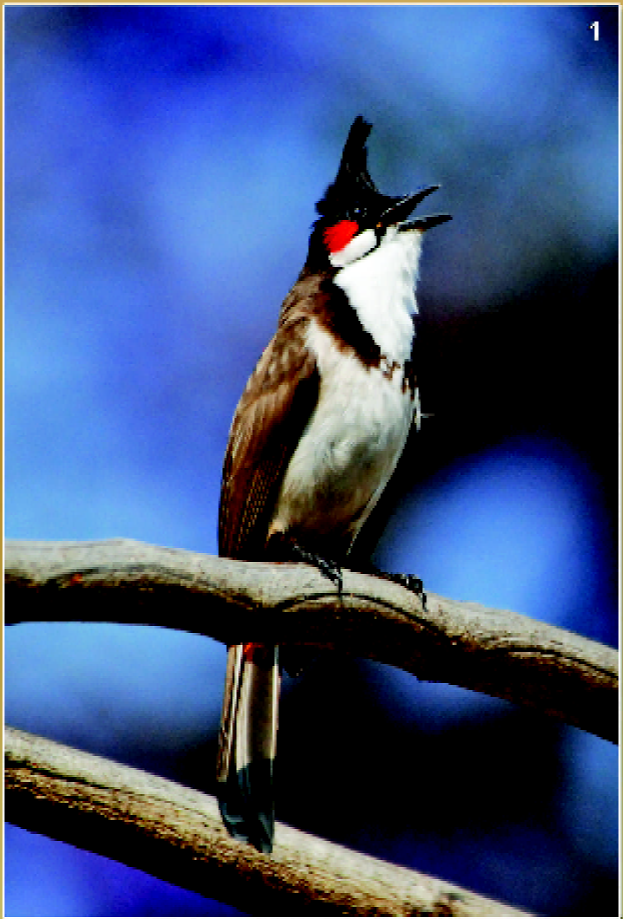
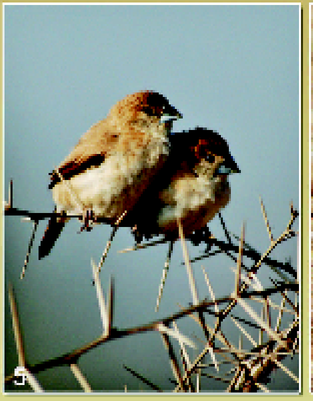
# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

Vol. : 50 No. 3 May - June 2010





**Vol. 50** **No. 3** **May - June 2010**

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## Note from the Publisher

*Dear fellow Birdwatchers*,

**Trailing the Oil Spills and the Bird Pathos**

Exxon Valdez tanker spill of nearly 11 million gallons of oil Alaska in 1989 had not only caused colossal environmental damage, but also wrought untold misery to countless birds and animals. For the Valdez oil spill misdemeanor, Exxon was forced to pay a fine of 150 million. In addition the much sullied company was compelled to shell $ 900 million to settle federal and state civil suits. The Valdez tanker spill was the largest in US history until it was eclipsed by the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon rig in Gulf of Mexico, on 20th April 2010, spilling 206 million gallons of oil from the blown-out BP well over a period of three months.

Dr. Pepper Trail, ornithologist and forensic birdman with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, has performed autopsies on thousands of oily bird carcasses from the Gulf of Mexico. According to him, the common causes of death for birds included hypothermia; drowning - because they lose their waterproofing and they can't fly and drown; direct toxicity - if they swallow a lot of oil, they can get respiratory problems (or) if they inhale oil, and starvation if they can't effectively forage.

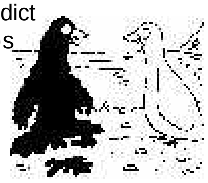
Species identification is yet another critical part, particularly when the bird carcass is covered in oil. A human-caused fatality of a protected species prompts legal action by the authorities. Therefore forensic analysis is mandatory to identify the species and determine the cause of death. In 2006, Dr. Trail published an article in the *Journal Environmental Management*, in which he estimated that between 500,000 and 1 million birds die every year as a result of oil spillage.

During the analysis, the feathers are cleaned and stored, along with skeletons and complete bird specimens, in long, low drawers in filing cabinets in a special room. Each specimen in the room serves as a reference against which methodical comparisons are made for vital forensic evidence. Efforts are made to make a visual match with a feather stored in a computerized database which Dr. Trail and his friends have created. "The Feather Atlas" has been available to the public on a website since 2007. The primary impetus for creating such an atlas was to have a resource for wildlife agents and inspectors so they would have reference material at their finger tips. Birdwatchers around the world have embraced the atlas. According to Dr. Trail, the website received 2.6 million hits so far. The site features photos from 172 species, and it is continually updated. Many pictures for a single species appear in the atlas because feathers come in many varieties. To view the Fish & Wildlife Service's "Feather Atlas," visit www.lab.fws.gov/featheratlas/index.php.

Incidentally, Syncrude, the largest operator of oil sands projects in Canada, was ordered to pay $2.92 million as fine for causing the deaths of 1,603 ducks. The company was convicted in June by an Alberta court for failing to deploy scarecrows and loud cannons in April 2008 to prevent the migratory birds from landing on a tailings pond containing oily residue from one of its operations. Climate and energy campaigners felt the fine was "no more than a slap on the wrist" considering the size of Syncrude, which produces about 110 million barrels of oil a year.

The problem of oil spillage has been festering India's shores too. In August this year, Goa beaches - Benaulim, Calangute, Siquerim, Candolim in north Goa and Colva, Betalbhatim and Sernabhatim in south Goa were covered with black tar balls due to a suspected oil spill. Yet a senior tourism official dismissed the event of tar balls surfacing along the beaches as a routine occurrence during monsoons and advised the tourists not to panic! But environmental activists had surmised that the collision between two merchant ships off the Mumbai coast on August 7 had caused a massive oil slick in the metropolis' shores and some surrounding areas. Mounds of the substance having a height of 6 to 7 inches were seen littering the shore and each wave was bringing more and more mucky matter.

Though a few countries impose fines or take stringent action against oil spillers, India is lagging behind in bringing the environmental culprits to book. Experts have been consistently pleading for developing new yardsticks to measure the damages to ecosystem comprehensively and to arraign the eco-buccaneers. Our birders should emulate Dr. Trail and make efforts to cast our own bird identification atlas. Such an atlas will be handy in the preparation of inventory of bird deaths due to oil spills. We have to take many proactive measures to protect our marine and estuarine biodiversity, lest the future generations indict us for our perpetual failure to respond to the pathos of the birds and animals.



Thanking you,
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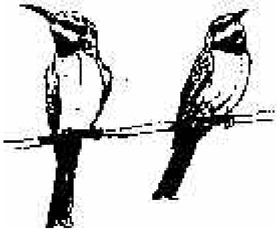


# Blue-tailed Bee-eaters are ‘winter migrants’ in and around Mumbai

**Raju Kasambe**, G-1, Laxmi Apartment, 64, Vidya Vihar Colony, Pratap Nagar,
Nagpur-440022, E-mail: kasambe.raju@gmail.com

Blue-tailed Bee-eater (*Merops philippinus*) a colourful bee-eater larger than Small Green Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*), has a black stripe through the eyes, deep chestnut throat and breast, bright blue rump and tail (Ali, 1996). It resembles Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops superciliosus*) in appearance.

The author has reported breeding of Blue-tailed bee-eaters in Central India and had studied them (Kasambe, 2004 & 2005) and is following the local migration of the birds with the help of internet.

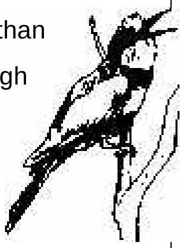
Internet and the web-groups of birdwatchers on the internet is an ocean of stored data contributed by different individuals, which can be easily accessed and analysed. For this article, an inventory search on the birding web group ‘birdsofbombay’ was done and e-mails which reported the sightings of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters in and around Mumbai were searched for. Data for six years from January 2001 to December 2006 was searched. Also mails were posted by the author to various other birding groups requesting veteran birders to inform about their sightings of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters anywhere in India. Even details were sought from the birdwatchers about the sightings if they failed to mention them in the web group postings. Then the sighting reports were sorted according to the location and month of sighting. However year of sighting was taken into account.

Surprisingly, in the sighting reports of the ‘birdsofbombay’ web group I realized that Blue-tailed Bee-eaters were reported in and around Mumbai from 10th October up to 29th March, which is the full span of winter in the area (see Table).

**Table: Sightings of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters in and around Mumbai in monthly order**

| Mesage No | Sighted on | Location | Sighted by |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5782 | 8/10/05 | Bheemeshwari | Lalit Narkhede |
| 4068 | 17/10/06 | Uran & Andheri | Shashank Dalvi |
| 5673 | 9/10/05 | Uran, Rewas,<br>to 19/10/05 | (4 times in 10 days)<br>Sewri Adesh Shivkar |
| 4081 | 23/10/06 | Uran, KN B* | Adesh Shivkar |
| 4193 | 3/11/04 | Uran | Venkateswaran Krishna |
| 1604 | 4/11/01 | Mumbai | Sunjoy Monga |
| 5778 | 6/11/05 | Mumbai | Ravi Vaidyanathan |
| 5828 | 15/11/06 | Mumbai | Kanwar B. Singh |
| 1769 | 8/12/01 | Mumbai | Sunjoy Monga |
| 4363 | 16/01/05 | Mumbai | Sunjoy Monga |
| 6268 | 27/01/06 | Mumbai | Carolann Pais |
| 6277 | 28/01/06 | Mumbai | Bindu Kapadia |
| 6281<br>6279 | 29/01/06 | Mumbai | Adesh Shivkar, Charanya Ganesh |
| 6396 | 21/02/06 | IIT, Powai | Adesh Shivkar |
| 6400 | 23/02/06 | IIT, Powai | Survashis Sarkar |
| 6423 | 8/03/06 | Mumbai | Ravi Vaidyanathan |
| 3562 | 28/03/04 | Mumbai | Sunjoy Monga |
| 3576 | 29/03/04 | Vashi | Adesh Shivkar |
| 3569 | 29/03/04 | SGNP* | Ajay Bhawnani |
| 3571 | 29/03/04 | SGNP* | Kiran Srivastava |
| 6606 | 21/04/06 | Bhimashankar | Adesh Shivkar |
| 1423 | 30/07/01 | Mumbai | Sunjoy Monga |

*Abbreviation: SGNP: Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Borivali, Mumbai
KNB : Karanja Naval Base



There are two interesting sightings, out of winter, one by Adesh on 21st April 2006 at Bheemashankar and another by Mr. Sunjoy Monga on 30th July 2001 at Mumbai. The first may indicate breeding of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters near Bheemashankar and the second might be a sick bird staying back in Mumbai even after the winter was over.

Abdulali (1981) has mentioned the species as ‘passage migrant’ in and around Mumbai. After this checklist all the subsequent publications (Monga, 2006) and internet communication have mentioned the species to be a ‘passage migrant’ in and around Mumbai. Whereas, the checklist of birds of Nashik by Raha *et. al.* (2004) mentions the status of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters at Nashik (not at Mumbai) as 'migrants' clarifying 'migrant' means birds which temporarily resides in Nashik district and best time to see them is from end of September to March.

We hereby, like to emphasize and correct the status of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters as 'winter migrants' from the prevailing 'passage migrant' in and around Mumbai.

**Acknowledgments:**

Thanks to Mr. Ravi Vaidyanathan and Mr. Adesh Shivkar for their help during the data collection. They always remembered to inform me about the sightings of these birds. Thanks to all the veteran birders, 'birdsofbombay' web group and its moderator for the data.

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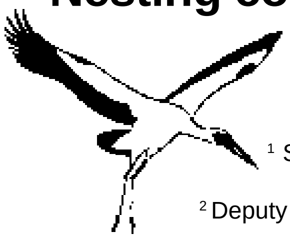
# Nesting colony of Asian Open-bill Stork *Anastomus oscitans* in Kanki Village, Korba District, Chhattisgarh.



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## Introduction

Ali (1979) and Ali & Ripley (1989) described status, distribution and breeding biology of Asian Open-bill *Anastomus oscitans* in the monumental publications 'The Book of Indian Birds" and "Compact Handbook". Chaudhry & Chakrabarti (1973), Kahl (1970), Law (1926) and Mukhopadyaya (1980) have also described the breeding biology of Asian Open-bill.

Asian Open-bill is widely distributed and breeds in India. Several thousand pairs breed in Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan (Ali & Ripley: 89). Datta & Pal (1993) studied the effect of human interference on nesting of Asian Open-bill. Subramanya (1996) compiled 40 nesting sites of Asian Open-bill in different parts of India. In central India nesting colony of Asian Open-bill have been identified in Bamhri Banjar near Kanha National Park Madhya Pradesh (Eric D'cunha & Ali: 2001), Pimpari village near Nawegaon National Park in Maharastra (Joshi et al.: 2008) and Danapur in Bihar (Choudhary Et al.: 2008). Agasimani (2009) made a preliminary study on heronry of Kanki. Information regarding nesting trees of Asian Open-bill Stork has not been documented in the central India. The object of this study is to give an account of nesting trees and habitat of Asian Open-bill Stork in Kanki village in Korba district in Chhattisgarh.

## Methodology

Kanki was visited and the nesting as well as other relevant details were studied and information collected from local residents. Majority of birds had left after nesting but some nests active and a few sub-adult chicks and adults were seen in the vicinity.

The number of nests on each tree was counted, approximate height of the trees were assessed. Visual observations of Open-bill Stork and its habitat were taken in November 2009. Nests were observed from the terrace of a nearby building using binoculars.

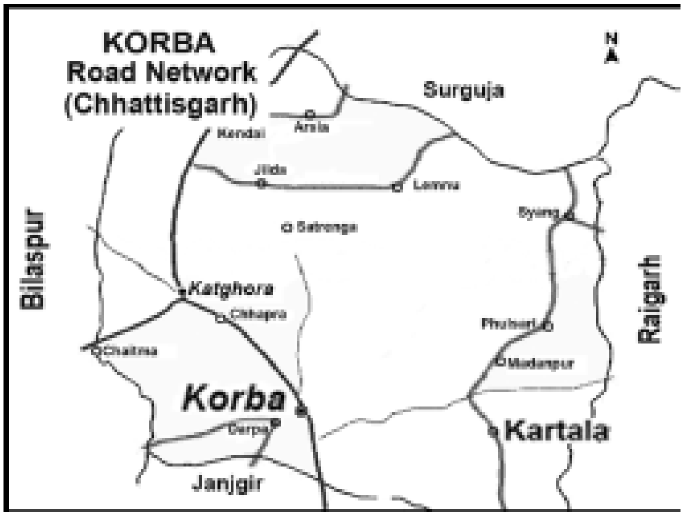
## Study Site

### *The Kanki Village*

The Kanki village is 25 km from Korba, an industrial town in the Karthala tahsil in Korba district. The District Korba is blessed with rich mineral deposits and has attracted largescale investments in Aluminum, Coal and Power Sectors. These investments have enabled Korba to emerge as a major industrial hub in central India (Anon: n. d.). In Korba and surroundings major industries including opencast coal mines, bauxite mines, coal base thermal power plants, aluminum plant, cement plants are located.

The village is situated on the banks of Hasdeo river. The river bank is at the threshold of soil erosion. The village lies at 22° 13' 47½ of north latitude and 82°39' 40½ east longitude. The altitude is 277 meters above mean sea level. There are 487 households with total population of 2271. About 33.8 % population belongs to tribal community. The geographical area of village is 881 hectares and 209 hectare is under irrigation from Hasdeo Reservoir and Hasdeo - Bango barrage canal system and tube wells. There are 4 perennial village ponds. Forest area of 249.6 hectare mainly of Sal trees *Shorea robusta* is found in the proposed for reserved forests.

There is a sacred grove of 17 large trees of 5 species around an ancient Kankeshwar or Chakreshwar Mahadev temple (Shiva) temple in the village, the trees are protected. Traditionally Asian Open-bill nests there in the monsoon (Table-1).



### Taxonomic Account of Asian Open-bill Stork

Asian Open-bill (Open-bill Stork) *Anastomus oscitans* (Boddaert, 1783) is a member of Stork Family *Ciconiidae*, placed in the Order *Ciconiiformes, Class Aves and* Phylum Chordata.

### Distribution of Asian Open-bill Stork

Asian Open-bill Stork is resident in South Asia, South-east Asia and southern parts of East Asia (Sonobe & Usui, 1993). It is a native of Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Vietnam. It is distributed throughout Indian Union, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, terai region of Nepal, Srilanka and Myanmar (Ali: 1979 and Ali & Ripley: 1989). The distribution map of Asian Open-bill indicates that it is distributed throughout the Indian Union except Jammu & Kashmir, high altitudes in Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh and north eastern states and drier regions of western most parts of Rajasthan (Kazmierczak & Perlo, 2000).

In Chhattisgarh the species is widely distributed and is a breeding resident. Nesting sites have been located at Village Lachkera (Raipur Distt), Mungelidih (Kabirdham distt), Gariaband (Raipur Distt), Charama (Kanker distt), Balmai (Bilaspur distt) to name few. At these sites the resident birds congregate to nest in good numbers from June to October every year since time immemorable and they are protected by the local people. However these sites have not been documented and studied, except for casual reports in local dailies or hearsay. Kanki is one such site.

### Conservation Status of Asian Open-bill Stork

In India it is a protected species under Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and is placed in Schedule IV 11(66). This species has an extremely large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for vulnerable under the range size criterion. The population trend is not known, but the population is not believed to be decreasing with sufficient rapidity to approach the thresholds under the population trend criterion. For these reasons the species is evaluated as Least Concern (IUCN Redlist: 2008).

Though the poaching threats to this species cannot be dismissed, the protection the birds gets at the nesting sites from the local communities, who treat the advent of the birds as good omen, is indeed heartwarming.

### Nesting Results

Nests of Asian Open-bills are seen only in the 17 trees standing in the sacred groves in the Shiva temple premises. Two Neem trees *Azadirachta indica* has 19 nests. One Semal *Bombax ceiba* and Peepal *Ficus religiosa* have 30 and 76 nests respectively. In 7 Chirhol trees *Holoptelia integrifolia* there are 148 nests whereas 6 Tamaraind tree *Tamarindus indica* have 494 the maximum number of nests. Average nests per tree are the highest in Tamarind which is 82.3 per tree. Whereas Chirhol has 21.1 nests per tree (Table-1).

**Table-1**

**Nesting Trees of Asian Open-bill**

| A | B | C | D | E | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Azadirachta indica* | Neem | 2 | 19 | 9.5 |
| 2 | *Bombax ceiba* | Semal | 1 | 30 | 30 |
| 3 | *Ficus religiosa* | Peepal | 1 | 76 | 76 |
| 4 | *Holoptelia integrifolia* | Chirhol | 7 | 148 | 21.1 |
| 5 | *Tamarindus indica* | Tamarind | 6 | 494 | 82.3 |
|  |  | **Total** | **17** | **767** | **45.1** |

A: Sl.No., B: Name of Trees (Scientific)
C: Vernacular Name D: Number of Trees
E: Number of Nests F: Average per Tree

Semal and Peepal trees constitute 5.9% of trees composition each, both have large crown contributing to 3.9 and 9.9 percentage of nests respectively whereas Neem tree which has dense ever green crown 11.8 % shelters only 2.5% nests. Chirhol trees are 41.2% bear 19.3% nests, on the other hand Tamarind trees is 35.3% has the highest 64.4% nests. Tamarind and Chirol are the most preferred trees for nesting of Asian Open-bill (Fig.-1).

Trees with height of 14 to 20 meters bear highest 36.6% nests, whereas trees with height of 26 to 30 meter have 26.3%

nests. Trees of 21-25, 31-35 and 36-40 have 9.9%, 12.8% and 14.3% nests, respectively. Trees of 14-20 meters are the preferred height for nesting of Asian Open-bill (Fig.-2).

Tamarind trees of height of 26-30 meters held the highest, 20.1% nests, whereas 14-20, 31-35 and 36-40 meters height class have 16.7%, 12.8% and 14.3% nests. Chirol trees of height of 14-20 meters bear 7.6% nests whereas 21-25 and 26-30 meters have 6.0% and 5.7% nests. Tamarind trees of 26-30 meters height are the most preferred nesting trees for Asian Open-bill (Fig.-3).

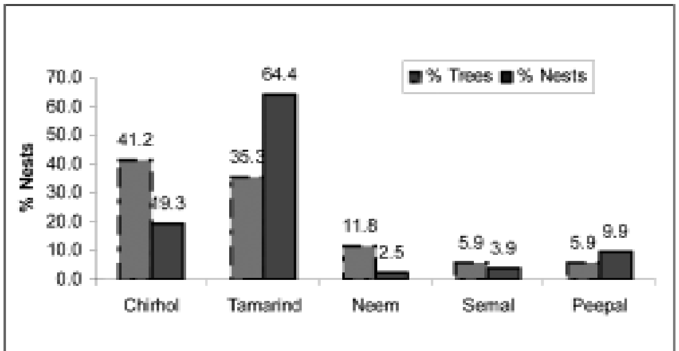


Fig.- 1 Preference of Nesting Tree Species

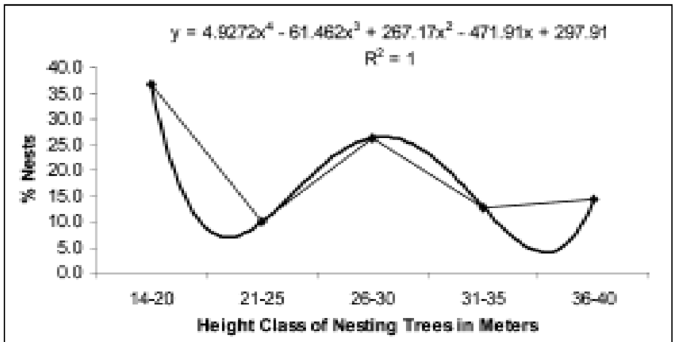


Fig.-2 Preference of Height of Trees

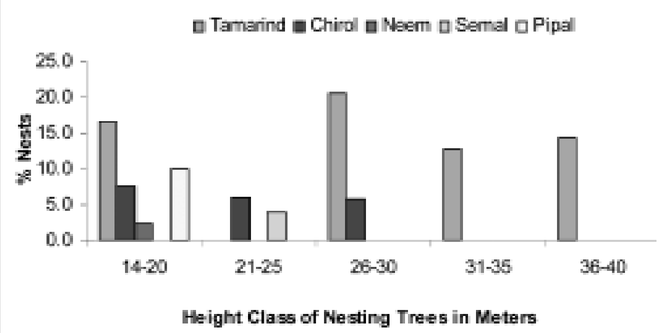


**Fig.3- Preference of Height of Trees Species**

Asian Open-bills arrive at the end of summer season and starts nesting at the onset of monsoon. They leave in October-November as the fledglings are able to fly. The local population considers its arrival as sign of good omen and therefore they protect the birds. However fallen chicks from the nests are picked up for their meat. They also use soil found under the nesting trees as manure for cultivation of water melon in the river bed.

## Discussion

The nests of Asian Open-bill are found only in the trees within the campus of Shiva temple. In the sacred groves of temple, the trees and nests are not disturbed. However, the religious activities may cause disturbance through noise. The nests are built in canopy of large trees. The Asian Open-bill has considerable tolerance towards man. To avoid the danger of human interference the birds nested in large numbers in the undisturbed zone and also higher in the disturbed zone (Dutta & Pal, 1993).

Common Palm Civet or Toddy Cat *Paradoxurus hermaphoroditus,* Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* and Common Indian Bronze-back or tree Snake *Dendrelaphis tristis* may be predators of eggs of Asian Open bill and its nestlings. During the night the Common Palm Civet prowls on trees killing the nesting birds (Prater; 1980). Tawny Eagle also feeds on sick or disabled birds (Ali1979). Naroji observed 11.8% predation of *Aquila* Eagle species on Asian Open-bill in Keoladeo National Park Bharatpur in 1985. Common Indian Bronze-back or trees snake is a diurnal snake that feeds on nestlings of birds (Daniel, 1983).

Air and water pollution from the opencast coal mines, bauxite mines, coal based thermal power plants, aluminum plants, cement plants and other satellite and ancillary industries may have an adverse effect on Asian Open-bill. Korba area has become a high pollution load area and its inhabitants are exposed to industrial emission and water pollution. A pall of dust and smoke hangs constantly over the sky at Korba (Lahiry; 1996). Asian Open-bill feeds on mollusks, Snails, Crabs, Frogs, It is seen feeding in the Hasdeo River, paddy fields and village ponds and other wetlands may also be affected with use of insecticides, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers in the paddy fields.

## Site Specific Recommendations

1. The site at Kanki, has been found to be a most suitable site, having tall trees and sufficient feeding grounds like river, village ponds, paddy fields & canal system, within 10-15 Km. radius. Despite constraints like overcrowding on account of religious celebrations and other needs of locals, efforts must be made to conserve the site, in its present shape. There is no need to change the status as the birds are very much accustomed to it, and are nesting here, since time immemorial**.**

2. The local community is voluntarily conserving the wildlife and habitat and have developed affinity for the nesting birds, their arrival here for nesting is considered a good omen as such the site can be considered to be declared as "Community Reserve" under section 36(D) of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. Community management may be constituted.

3. Villagers need to be properly educated / guided through educational programmes by arranging workshops, meetings etc., to protect and conserve the site from intruders and their activities, which can harm the nesting site and birds.

4. A Management Plan may be prepared and implemented for protection of wildlife and the habitat if necessary, as the residents are already protecting the site, they can also ensure that there is no further loss of habitat, like felling of trees, unwanted encroachments etc., in the nesting area.

5. Since the site is a sort of pilgrimage centre for locals, overcrowding during religious occasions cannot be avoided, but the tourism activities such as boating and entertainment centers could be minimised during the breeding season.

6. It was noticed that river Hasdeo is expanding its bed, and good 250-300 mts, erosion has taken place, in last 10/12 years and has already reached the edges of nesting colony and the possibility of its destruction in near future cannot be overruled. Hence action for river bank stabilization and soil conservation may be considered and taken up in a systematic manner.

7. The tree species on which the birds nest, have few younger trees growing in the area, these trees need to be conserved, as these may provide additional nesting space in future. There is no need to consider exotic species for plantation.

8. In case Interpretation Centre and Watch towers are planned for construction, they must be built 2 or 3 Km away near the main canal or any other suitable distant site and not inside the nesting area.

9. Locals say there are around 500 nesting birds but no authentic comparative data for the previous years are available. Scientific monitoring of the heronry has to be undertaken annually to assess population fluctuations.

10. Instances of killing of nestlings, stealing of eggs, poaching of storks in rice fields and other feeding grounds, have been reported. Efforts must be made to stop or minimize these illegal activities. Any person found doing so, must be penalized by Panchayat / management or prosecuted by court of law. Use of catapult, traps, firearms, must be banned in the vicinity.

11. Environmental Impact Assessment of all development activities with special reference to nesting of open bill stork in the heronry has to be undertaken.

12. Air, water and other kinds of pollution which is on the increase in the locality needs to be brought down to minimum, for safe future of the species and other denizens. Use of insecticide and pesticide has to be brought down to ensure adequate food supply during nesting period

13. The authorities should consult NGO's in implementation of the above recommendations which are expected to yield the desired results.

## Acknowledgments

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**Birds recorded & probable in Korba – Kanki area**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lesser Whistling-duck | *Dendrocygna javanica* | R.C |
| 2 | Ruddy Shelduck | *Tadorna ferruginea* | M,C |
| 3 | Cotton Pygmy-goose | *Nettapus coromandelianus* | R,C |
| 4 | Northern Shoveler | *Anas clypeata* | M,O |
| 5 | Northern Pintail | *Anas acuta* | M,C |
| 6 | Garganey | *Anas querquedula* | M,C |
| 7 | Red-crested Pochard | *Rhodonessa rufina* | M,C |
| 8 | Tufted Duck | *Aythya fuligula* | M |
| 9 | Yellow-crowned Woodpecker | *Dendrocopos mahrattensis* | R,C |
| 10 | Rufous Woodpecker | *Celeus brachyurus* | R,C |
| 11 | Lesser Yellownape | *Picus chlorolophus* | R,O |
| 12 | Streak-throated Woodpecker | *Picus xanthopygaeus* | R,UC |
| 13 | Black-rumped Flameback | *Dinopium benghalense* | R,C |
| 14 | White-naped Woodpecker | *Chrysocolaptes festivus* | R,O |
| 15 | Brown-headed Barbet | *Megalaima zeylanica* | R,C |
| 16 | Coppersmith Barbet | *Megalaima haemacephala* | R,C |
| 17 | Indian Grey Hornbill | *Ocyceros birostris* | R,C |
| 18 | Common Hoopoe | *Upupa epops* | R,M,C |
| 19 | Indian Roller | *Coracias benghalensis* | R,C |
| 20 | Common Kingfisher | *Alcedo atthis* | R.C |
| 21 | Stork-billed Kingfisher | *Halcyon capensis* | R,O |
| 22 | White-throated Kingfisher | *Halcyon smyrnensis* | R,C |
| 23 | Pied Kingfisher | *Ceryle rudis* | R,C |
| 24 | Green Bee-eater | *Merops orientalis* | R,LM,C |
| 25 | Pied Cuckoo | *Clamator jacobinus* | M,C |
| 26 | Common Hawk Cuckoo | *Hierococcyx varius* | R,C |
| 27 | Asian Koel | *Eudynamys scolopacea* | R,LM,C |
| 28 | Greater Coucal | *Centropus sinensis* | R,C |
| 29 | Alexandrine Parakeet | *Psittacula eupatria* | R,C |
| 30 | Rose-ringed Parakeet | *Psittacula krameri* | R,C |
| 31 | Plum-headed Parakeet | *Psittacula cyanocephala* | R,C |
| 32 | White-rumped Needletail | *Zoonavena sylvatica* | R,C |
| 33 | Asian Palm Swift | *Cypsiurus balasiensis* | R,C |
| 34 | Common Swift | *Apus apus* | R,C |
| 35 | Crested Tree swift | *Hemiprocne coronata* | R,C |
| 36 | Barn Owl | *Tyto alba* | R,C |
| 37 | Collared Scops Owl | *Otus bakkamoena* | R,C |
| 38 | Brown Fish Owl | *Ketupa zeylonensis* | R,C,LM |
| 39 | Mottled Wood Owl | *Strix ocellata* | R,C |
| 40 | Jungle Owlet | *Glaucidium radiatum* | R,C |
| 41 | Spotted Owlet | *Athene brama* | R,C |
| 42 | Indian Nightjar | *Caprimulgus asiaticus* | R,C |
| 43 | Rock pigeon | *Columba livia* | R,C |
| 44 | Laughing Dove | *Streptopelia senegalensis* | R,C |
| 45 | Spotted Dove | *Streptopelia chinensis* | R,C |
| 46 | Eurasian Collared Dove | *Streptopelia decaocto* | R,C |
| 47 | Yellow-footed Green Pigeon | *Treron phoenicoptera* | R,C |
| 49 | White-breasted Waterhen | *Amaurornis phoenicurus* | R,C |
| 49 | Purple Swamphen | *Porphyrio porphyrio* | R,C |
| 50 | Common Moorhen | *Gallinula chloropus* | R,C |
| 51 | Common Coot | *Fulica atra* | R,M,C |
| 52 | Pintail Snipe | *Gallinago stenura* | M,O |
| 53 | Black-tailed Godwit | *Limosa limosa* | M,UC |
| 54 | Eurasian Curlew | *Numenius arquata* | M,UC |
| 55 | Common Redshank | *Tringa totanus* | M,UC |
| 56 | Marsh Sandpiper | *Tringa stagnatilis* | M,C |
| 57 | Common Greenshank | *Tringa nebularia* | M,C |
| 58 | Green Sandpiper | *Tringa ochropus* | M,C |
| 59 | Wood Sandpiper | *Tringa glareola* | M,O |
| 60 | Common Sandpiper | *Actitis hypoleucos* | M,C |
| 61 | Greater Painted-snipe | *Rostratula benghalensis* | R,C |
| 62 | Pheasant-tailed Jacana | *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* | R,C |
| 63 | Bronze-winged Jacana | *Metopidius indicus* | R,C |
| 64 | Black-winged Stilt | *Himantopus himantopus* | R,LM,C |
| 65 | Common Ringed Plover | *Charadrius hiaticula* | M,O |
| 66 | Little Ringed Plover | *Charadrius dubius* | M,C |
| 67 | Kentish Plover | *Charadrius alexandrinus* | M,UC |
| 68 | Yellow-wattled Lapwing | *Vanellus malabaricus* | R,C |
| 69 | Red-wattled Lapwing | *Vanellus indicus* | R,C |
| 70 | Brown-headed Gull | *Larus brunnicephalus* | M,UC |
| 71 | River Tern | *Sterna aurantia* | R,LM,UC |
| 72 | Osprey | *Pandion haliaetus* | M,O |
| 73 | Oriental Honey-buzzard | *Pernis ptilorhynchus* | M,C |
| 74 | Black-shouldered Kite | *Elanus caeruleus* | R,LM,C |
| 75 | Black Kite | *Milvus migrans* | R,C |
| 76 | Brahminy Kite | *Haliastur indus* | R,UC |
| 77 | Grey-headed Fish Eagle | *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* | R,LM,UC |

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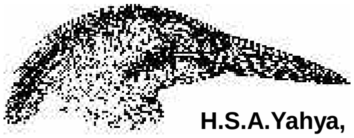
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 78 | Egyptian Vulture | *Neophron percnopterus* | R,UC |
| 79 | White-rumped Vulture | *Gyps bengalensis* | R,C |
| 80 | Indian Long Billed Vulture | *Gyps indicus* | R,C |
| 81 | Short-toed Snake Eagle | *Circaetus gallicus* | R,UC |
| 82 | Eurasian Marsh Harrier | *Circus aeruginosus* | M,C |
| 83 | Little Grebe | *Tachybaptus ruficollis* | R,C |
| 84 | Great Crested Grebe | *Podiceps cristatus* | M,C |
| 85 | Little Cormorant | *Phalacrocorax niger* | R,O |
| 86 | Indian Cormorant | *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis* | R,C |
| 87 | Great Cormorant | *Phalacrocorax carbo* | R,C |
| 88 | Little Egret | *Egretta garzetta* | R.C |
| 89 | Grey Heron | *Ardea cinerea* | R,C |
| 90 | Purple Heron | *Ardea purpurea* | R,C |
| 91 | Great Egret | *Casmerodius albus* | R.,C |
| 92 | Intermediate Egret | *Mesophoyx intermedia* | R,C |
| 93 | Cattle Egret | *Bubulcus ibis* | R,C |
| 94 | Indian Pond Heron | *Ardeola grayii* | R,C |
| 95 | Black-crowned Night Heron | *Nycticorax nycticorax* | R,C |
| 96 | Little Bittern | *Ixobrychus minutus* | R,UC |
| 97 | Yellow Bittern | *Ixobrychus sinensis* | R,UC |
| 98 | Cinnamon Bittern | *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* | R,C |
| 99 | Black Bittern | *Dupetor flavicollis* | R,C |
| 100 | Great Bittern | *Botaurus stellaris* | R,UC |
| 101 | Black-headed Ibis | *Threskiornis melanocephalus* | R,LM,UC |
| 102 | Black Ibis | *Pseudibis papillosa* | R.LM,C |
| 103 | Painted Stork | *Mycteria leucocephala* | R,UC |
| 104 | Asian Openbill | *Anastomus oscitans* | R,C |
| 105 | Woolly-necked Stork | *Ciconia episcopus* | R,UC |
| 106 | Golden-fronted Leafbird | *Chloropsis aurifrons* | R,LM, UC |
| 107 | Bay-backed Shrike | *Lanius vittatus* | R,C |
| 108 | Long-tailed Shrike | *Lanius schach* | R,C |
| 109 | Rufous Treepie | *Dendrocitta vagabunda* | R,C |
| 110 | House Crow | *Corvus splendens* | R,C |
| 111 | Large-billed Crow | *Corvus macrorhynchos* | R,C |
| 112 | Eurasian Golden Oriole | *Oriolus oriolus* | R,C |
| 113 | Black-hooded Oriole | *Oriolus xanthornus* | R,C |
| 114 | Large Cuckoo shrike | *Coracina macei* | R,C |
| 115 | Black-winged Cuckoo shrike | *Coracina melaschistos* | M,O |
| 116 | Black-headed Cuckoo shrike | *Coracina melanoptera* | R,C |
| 117 | Small Minivet | *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* | R,C |
| 118 | White-browed Fantail | *Rhipidura aureola* | R,C |
| 119 | Black Drongo | *Dicrurus macrocercus* | R,C |
| 120 | White-bellied Drongo | *Dicrurus caerulescens* | R,C |
| 121 | Greater Racket-tailed Drongo | *Dicrurus paradiseus* | R,C |
| 122 | Black-naped Monarch | *Hypothymis azurea* | R,C |
| 123 | Asian Paradise-flycatcher | *Terpsiphone paradisi* | LM,C |
| 124 | Common Iora | *Aegithina tiphia* | R,C |
| 125 | Blue-winged Leaf bird | *Chloropsis cochinchinensis* | R,LM,C |
| 126 | Common Woodshrike | *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* | R,UC |
| 127 | Asian Brown Flycatcher | *Muscicapa dauurica* | M,C |
| 128 | Red-throated Flycatcher | *Ficedula parva* | M,C |
| 129 | Little Pied Flycatcher | *Ficedula westermanni* | M,UC |
| 130 | Ultramarine Flycatcher | *Ficedula superciliaris* | M,O |
| 131 | Blue-throated Flycatcher | *Cyornis rubeculoides* | M,UC |
| 132 | Tickell's Blue Flycatcher | *Cyornis tickelliae* | R,C |
| 133 | Bluethroat | *Luscinia svecica* | M,C |
| 134 | Oriental Magpie Robin | *Copsychus saularis* | R,C |
| 135 | Indian Robin | *Saxicoloides fulicata* | R,C |
| 136 | Black Redstart | *Phoenicurus ochruros* | M,C |
| 137 | Common Stonechat | *Saxicola torquata* | M,C |
| 138 | Pied Bushchat | *Saxicola caprata* | R,C |
| 139 | Chestnut-tailed Starling | *Sturnus malabaricus* | R,C |
| 140 | Brahminy Starling | *Sturnus pagodarum* | R.C |
| 141 | Rosy Starling | *Sturnus roseus* | M,C |
| 142 | Asian Pied Starling | *Sturnus contra* | R,C |
| 143 | Common Myna | *Acridotheres tristis* | R,C |
| 144 | Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch | *Sitta castanea* | R,C |
| 145 | Velvet-fronted Nuthatch | *Sitta frontalis* | R,O |
| 146 | Great Tit | *Parus major* | R,C |
| 147 | Black-lored Tit | *Parus xanthogenys* | R,UC |
| 148 | Barn Swallow | *Hirundo rustica* | V,M,C |
| 149 | Wire-tailed Swallow | *Hirundo smithii* | V,M,UC |
| 150 | Red-rumped Swallow | *Hirundo daurica* | V,M,C |
| 151 | Red-vented Bulbul | *Pycnonotus cafer* | R,C |
| 152 | Ashy Prinia | *Prinia socialis* | R,C |
| 153 | Plain Prinia | *Prinia inornata* | R,C |
| 154 | Oriental White-eye | *Zosterops palpebrosus* | R,C |
| 155 | Paddyfield Warbler | *Acrocephalus agricola* | R,UC |
| 156 | Blyth's Reed Warbler | *Acrocephalus dumetorum* | M,C |
| 156 | Common Tailorbird | *Orthotomus sutorius* | R,C |
| 158 | Common Chiffchaff | *Phylloscopus collybita* | M,C |
| 159 | Plain Leaf Warbler | *Phylloscopus neglectus* | M,UC |
| 160 | Common Babbler | *Turdoides caudatus* | R,C |
| 161 | Jungle Babbler | *Turdoides striatus* | R,C |
| 162 | Lesser Whitethroat | *Sylvia curruca blythii* | M,C |
| 163 | Singing Bush lark | *Mirafra cantillans* | R,C |
| 164 | Indian Bush lark | *Mirafra erythroptera* | R,UC |
| 165 | Bengal Bush lark | *Mirafra assamica* | LM,O |
| 166 | Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark | *Eremopterix grisea* | R,C |
| 167 | Rufous-tailed Lark | *Ammomanes phoenicurus* | R,C |
| 168 | Thick-billed Flowerpecker | *Dicaeum agile* | R,C |
| 169 | Pale-billed Flowerpecker | *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos* | R,C |
| 170 | Purple-rumped Sunbird | *Nectarinia zeylonica* | R,C |
| 171 | Purple Sunbird | *Nectarinia asiatica* | R,C |
| 172 | House Sparrow | *Passer domesticus* | R,C |
| 173 | Chestnut-shouldered Petronia | *Petronia xanthocollis* | R,C |
| 174 | White Wagtail | *Motacilla alba dukhunensis* | M,V,C |
| 175 | White-browed Wagtail | *Motacilla maderaspatensis* | R,LM,C |
| 176 | Citrine Wagtail | *Motacilla citreola citreola* | M,UC |
| 177 | Yellow Wagtail | *Motacilla flava* | M,C |
| 178 | Grey Wagtail | *Motacilla cinerea* | M,V,C |
| 179 | Paddy field Pipit | *Anthus rufulus* | R,C |
| 180 | Black-breasted Weaver | *Ploceus benghalensis* | R,UC |
| 181 | Baya Weaver | *Ploceus philippinus* | R,C |
| 182 | Red Avadavat | *Amandava amandava* | R,C |
| 183 | Indian Silverbill | *Lonchura malabarica* | R,C |
| 184 | Scaly-breasted Munia | *Lonchura punctulata* | R,C |
| 185 | Black-headed Munia | *Lonchura malacca* | R,UC |

**Abbreviations :** P-Passerby, V-Vagrant, S-Straggler, R-Resident, UC-Uncommon, M-Migratory, V-Vagrant, C- Common, LM-Local migratory,



# Occurrence of the Little Bittern in Riyadh area, Saudi Arabia

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The Little Bittern, *Ixobrychus minutus*, is called 'Waaq saghir' in Arabic (Godman & Meininger, 1989). Though it is rather a common bird, owing to its cryptic nature and camouflaging among marshy reeds, it is not seen easily. However, it was surprising that local people have frequently caught this bird during 1995-1997 around Riyadh between August and September. One reason for this might be that the Little Bittern breeds around this time in this locality and as reported by Meinertzhgen (1954) it is much less secretive during breeding season and sits in open areas and when flushed does not fly far. However, a more possible reason may be that since they start migration around this time (see also Paran & Shluter, 1981) and some birds get exhausted after the long journey and are thus caught easily. According to Dai James (Pers.com.), a regular birdwatcher in Riyadh, the Little Bittern was first seen in this area in 1987-88 and thereafter have been recorded regularly. He estimated about 50 pairs breeding in 1990. According to our observations the present population is around 200-300 pairs (see Yahya & Salamah 1996). However, their frequent trapping by locals indicate a higher population, especially during migratory season.

The Little Bittern also breeds across Eurasia east to the Central Asian Republics, NW China and NW India. Almost the entire population winters in Africa and like all bitterns, because of its size and habitat, the Little Bittern is inadequately covered by the Asian Wetland Census and its global population trend is unknown (Pernnou *et al.*, 1994). However according to Peter Symen (Pers. Comn.) its population is declining in Europe.

Recently six Little Bitterns were brought to the NCWCD office. Five of them were subsequently ringed (Table 1) and released at Al-Hair Bird Sanctuary, nearby Riyadh. There are only two more ringing records from Saudi Gulf: F00006 and F000321 ringed on 19.4.1991 and 13.8.1991, respectively.

The Little Bittern is distributed widely (Ali & Ripley, 1978, Hollom et al 1988). Though they are largely resident, are also subject to local, passage and winter migration. As reported by Paran & Shluter (1981) the migration takes place mainly at dusk, but the birds move during day hours also and at times as many as 1,861 birds have been recorded in Israel. Although no such large flock have been reported authentically from Saudi so far, at Al-kharj (80km southeast Riyadh) congregation of large numbers have been reported by locals. During migration the little bitterns prefer reeds and swamps to rest and recoup but in absence of these may rest on treetops or on land and this could not be a surprise as opined by Gooders (1969).

It is interesting to note here that the Little Bittern was earlier confined only to Gulf wetlands in Arabia (Jennings 1981), but now can be found as far north - west as Tabuk area. As various reports indicate, it is extending its range in all directions in the Arabian Peninsula. There may be various reasons for range extension of an animal. While annual rainfall may be a key factor for distribution of nomadic birds, for birds like Little Bittern scarcity of well-covered marshland could be the limiting factor. Recent developments, such as expansion of agriculture and creation of several man-made canal system as an outcome of sewage water treatment plants, in Saudi Arabia, have provided suitable habitat and several species are not found in new areas (Yahya, 1995). So much so that some of the migratory birds like Shoveller, Ferruginous Duck, Mallard, etc., have started breeding in the Kingdom (Evans 1994; Yahya 1994). Though the extension of range by several avian species may be a very welcome phenomenon for bird enthusiasts, a caution has to be maintained for alarming proliferation of birds like parakeets, house crows and house sparrows. Their population and future movements need constant monitoring. Of late invasive birds have created problems at many places including Andamans (Rauf Ali, 2003).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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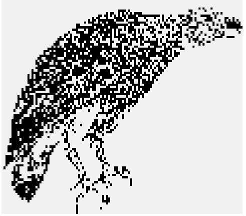
**Table 1: Details of Little Bittern ringed at Riyadh.**

| Date | Ring Nos. | Age | *Sex | Measurements in mm. | | | | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Wing | Bill | Tarsus | Tail | |
| 30.08.94 | E002004 | Young | F | 147 | 50 | 48 | 44 | |
| 04.09.94 | E002005 | Adult | F | 148 | 50 | 50 | 47 | Brood Patch present, but started covering |
| 11.09.09 | E002006 | Adult | Un | 148 | 49 | 48 | 45 | |
| 01.10.09 | E002007 | Young | Un | 149 | 48 | 46 | 45 | |
| 04.10.09 | F000336 | Adult | F | 149 | 46 | 45 | 47 | |

*F = Female; Un = Unknown



# Avifaunal observations in Ranthombhore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, India

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## Introduction

Ranthombhore National Park is situated between the longitude of 76.23' E to 76.39' E and latitude 25.84' N to 26.12' N in the Sawaimadhopur district of Rajasthan. The total area of the Park is 392.50sq. km. It has a core area of 274.5 sq. Km.During the study period only three Range (Ranthombhore project tiger (RoPT), Khander and Kundera) were covered of which Tamakhand, Singduwar, Jagimehal, Badal, Guda, Chindawli, Lahpur, Thumka, Galaisagar, Anatpura, Kachida, Chiroli, Lakharda, Indala, Mansarobar, Sultanpur beats were surveyed.

## Vegetation

The broad vegetation pattern of Ranthombhore is dry-deciduous forest. The terrain is somehow undulating. The forest reserve are classified under the semi arid bio-geographic zone and falls under the Gujrat Rajwara province. The dominant plant species are Dhok *(Anogeissus pendula)*, Khair *(Acacia catechu)*, Ber *(Zizyphus mauritiana)*, Amaltas *(Cassia fistula)*, Babul *(Acacia nilotica)*, Khajur *(Phoenix sylvestris)*,Reonj (Acacia leucophloea), Semal *(Bombax ceiba)*, Shisham *(Dalbergia sissoo)*, Siris *(Albizzia procera), (A. Lebbek)*, Tendu *(Diospyros melanoxylum)*, Bistendu *(Dispyros cordiflolia)*, Cheela *(Butea monosperma)* etc. Underneath cover is not very dense. Most of the shrubs cover is dominated by the *Grewia spp*.. Main shrub species are Chaprayan *(Grewia flaveseens),* Chabeni *(G. Tenax)*, Jal *(Capparis separia)* and Jharbar *(Zizyphus nummularia)*. During the dry season, *Jal* turn to an important shrub as its leaves and young shoots provide food for the wild ungulates. Ranthombhore harbours very rich savannah pattern of grassland which provide maximum food to the wild ungulates. These grasslands are intensively used by the wild animals.

## Fauna

Ranthombhore harbours a good population of Royal Bengal Tiger (Panther tigris). Other carnivores include Leopard *(Panthera pardus)*, Jungle cat *(Felis chaus)*, Hyaena *(Hyaena hyaena)*, Wolf *(Canis lupus)*, Caracal *(Felis caracal)*. Other animals include Common Mongoose *(Herpestes auropunctatus)*, Indian Porcupine *(Hystrix indica),* Sloth Bear *(Melursus ursinus)*, Common Langur *(Presbytis entellus)*, Rhesus Macaque *(Macaca mulata),* etc.

The ungulate fauna includes Blue Bull *(Boselaphus tragocamelus),* Chinkara *(Gazella gazelle)*, Wild Boar *(Sus scrofa),* Samber *(Cervus unicolor)*, Chital *(Axis axis)*. These animals provide good prey base for Tigers.

The study was conducted discontinuously from March to May, 2010 for two months, using direct visual count. The birds were sighted using a binocular (8x40). For the spot identification we followed slandered field guides (Grimmett *et al.,* 1999) and Kazmierczak (2000). The nomenclature and systematic sequence of birds as given by Manakadan and Pittie (2004) were used.

## Observations

The study was conducted from April to May 2010. In all 144 species belonging to 54 families (Table-1) were identified. Earlier 272 species were recorded from the park (Choudhury, 2000). Highest number of species was recorded from the family Accipitridae (n=10) followed by Anatidae (n=9) and Ardeidae (n=8). 29.66% birds were recorded as wader and water bird of which Anatidae (n=9) forms the main bulk species. During the study period 3 species of birds were recorded as Near Threatened (*Anhinga melanogaster, Mycteria leucocephala, Sarcogyps calvus),* one Vulnerable *(Haliaeetus leucoryphus),* and one Critically Endangered *(Gyps indicus).* 15 active nests of *Gyps indicus* were recorded during the study period. Couple of nesting birds were observed (*Columba livia, Treron phoenicoptera, Acridotheres tristis, Corvus macrorhynchos, Petronia xanthocollis, Gyps indicus, Milvus migrans ).* A good number of *Tadorna ferruginea* was observed up to the end of May, when most of the wintering birds left. Water could be one of the main constrain for the aquatic birds, but restoration of existing water bodies would overcome from the problem. During the peak summer season avaialability of drinking water for animals was a major problem, digging of water holes would mitigate the problem. It would not only provide water for animals but would also provide drinking and bathing for birds. The forest department has already created some artificial water holes in different parts of the park. During this study period, we observed the utilization of those water holes. Of the 70.35% observed terrestrial birds, 42.57% (n=43) birds were observed near the water holes. So, it is clearly reflected that they utilized the water holes during the peak summer. The birds were observed drinking from the water holes without any inter or intra specific conflicts.

## Acknowledgment

We would like to thank the Park Authority, Ranthombhore division, Rajasthan for their logistic support. We also extend our thanks to our field assistants and driver for their co-operation during the data collection.

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**Table-1.Checklist of the birds of Ranthombhore Tiger Reserve observed during March-May, 2010**

**Family- Podicipedidae**

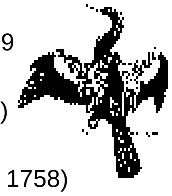
1. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Pallas, 1764)

**Family-Phalacrocoracidae**

2. Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* (Vieillot, 1817)
3. Indian Shag Phalacrocorax fuscicollis Stephens, 1826

**Family-Anhingidae**

4. Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* Pennant, 1769



**Family-Ardeidae**

5. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (Linnaeus, 1766)
6. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Linnaeus, 1758
7. Large Egret *Casmerodius albus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
8. Median Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia* (Wagler, 1829)
9. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (Linnaeus, 1758)
10. Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii* (Sykes, 1832)
11. Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (Linnaeus, 1758)
12. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* (Gmelin, 1789)

**Family- Ciconiidae**

13. Painted Stork (60) *Mycteria leucocephala* (Pennant, 1769)
14. Asian Openbill-Stork *Anastomus oscitans* (Boddaert, 1783)
15. White-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* (Boddaert, 1783)

**Family- Threskiornithidae**

16. Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* (Temminck, 1824)
17. Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Linnaeus, 1758

**Family- Anatidae**

18. Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (Horsfield, 1821)
19. Bar-headed Goose Anser indicus (Latham, 1790)
20. Brahminy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (Pallas, 1764)
21. Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus* (Gmelin, 1789)
22. Gadwall *Anas strepera* Linnaeus, 1758
23. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Linnaeus, 1758
24. Northern Shoveller *Anas clypeata* Linnaeus, 1758
25. Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Linnaeus, 1758
26. Common Teal *Anas crecca* Linnaeus, 1758

**Family-Accipitridae**

27. Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (Temminck, 1821)
28. Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (Desfontaines, 1789)
29. Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (Boddaert, 1783)
30. Pallas's Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* (Pallas, 1771)
31. Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
32. Long-billed Vulture *Gyps indicus* (Scopoli, 1786)
33. Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* (Scopoli, 1786)
34. Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela* (Latham, 1790
35. Shikra *Accipiter badius* (Gmelin, 1788)
36. Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* (Cretzschmar, 1827)

**Family-Pandionidae**

37. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family-Phasianidae**

38. Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* (Gmelin, 1789)
39. Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (Linnaeus, 1758)
40. Painted Spurfowl *Galloperdix lunulata* (Valenciennes, 1825)
41. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* Linnaeus, 1758

**Family- Rallidae**

42. White-breasted Waterhen (343-345) *Amaurornis phoenicurus* (Pennant, 1769)
43. Common Moorhen (347-347a) *Gallinula chloropus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
44. Purple Moorhen (348-349) *Porphyrio porphyrio* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family-Jacanidae**

45. Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* (Scopoli, 1786)
46. Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus* (Latham, 1790)

**Family-Charadriidae**

47. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Scopoli, 1786
48. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* (Boddaert, 1783)

**Family-Scolopacidae**

49. Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa (Linnaeus, 1758)
50. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (Linnaeus, 1758)
51. Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* (Pallas, 1764)
52. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
53. Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (Gunner, 1767)
54. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Linnaeus, 1758
55. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Linnaeus, 1758

**Family- Recurvirostridae**

56. Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Linnaeus, 1758
57. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family- Laridae**

58. River Tern *Sterna aurantia* J.E. Gray, 1831

**Family- Pteroclididae**

59. Painted Sandgrouse *Pterocles indicus* (Gmelin, 1789)

**Family- Columbidae**

60. Blue Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* Gmelin, 1789
61. Little Brown Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* (Linnaeus, 1766)
62. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* (Scopoli, 1786)
63. Red Collared-Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* (Hermann, 1804)
64. Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (Frivaldszky, 1838)
65. Yellow-legged Green-Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera* (Latham, 1790)

**Family- Psittacidae**

66. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (Linnaeus, 1766)
67. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (Scopoli, 1769)
68. Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala* (Linnaeus, 1766)

**Family-Cuculidae**

69. Pied Crested Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* (Boddaert, 1783)
70. Brainfever Bird *Hierococcyx varius* (Vahl, 1797)
71. Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Linnaeus, 1758
72. Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea* (Linnaeus, 1758)
73. Sirkeer Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii* (Lesson, 1830)
74. Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* (Stephens, 1815)

**Family-Tytonidae**

75. Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (Scopoli, 1769)

**Family-Strigidae**

76. Collared Scops-Owl *Otus bakkamoena* Pennant, 1769
77. Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo* (Linnaeus, 1758)
78. Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* (Gmelin, 1788)
79. Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* (Temminck, 1821)

**Family-Caprimulgidae**

80. Franklin's Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis* Horsfield, 1821
81. Common Indian Nightjar *Caprimulgus asiaticus* Latham, 1790

Family-Apodidae

82. House Swift *Apus affinis* (J.E. Gray, 1830)

**Family- Alcedinidae**

83. Small Blue Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (Linnaeus, 1758)
84. White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* (Linnaeus, 1758)
85. Lesser Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family- Meropidae**

86. Small Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* Latham, 1801

**Family-Coraciidae**

87. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family-Upupidae**

88. Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Linnaeus, 1758

**Family- Bucerotidae**

89. Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris* (Scopoli, 1786)

**Family- Capitonidae**

90. Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* (P.L.S. Müller, 1776)

**Family-Picidae**

91. Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis* (Latham, 1801)
92. Black-shouldered Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus* (Boddaert, 1783)
93. Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family- Alaudidae**

94. Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix grisea* (Scopoli, 1786)
95. Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* (Gould, 1839)
96. Common Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family- Hirundinidae**

97. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Linnaeus, 1771
98. Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* Leach, 1818

**Family- Motacillidae**

99. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Linnaeus, 1758
100. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Pallas, 1776
101. Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus* Vieillot, 1818

**Family-Campephagidae**

102. Large Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina macei* (Lesson, 1830)
103. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* (Linnaeus, 1766)
104. Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus* (Forster, 1781)
105. Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* (Gmelin, 1789)

**Family-Pycnonotidae**

106. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* (Linnaeus, 1766)
107. White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis* (Gould, 1836)

**Family-Irenidae**

108. Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea* (Marshall, 1876)

**Family-Laniidae**

109. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* Linnaeus, 1758
110. Rufous-backed Shrike *Lanius schach* Linnaeus, 1758
111. Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus* (Vigors, 1831)

**Family-Turdinae**

112. Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (Linnaeus, 1758)
113. Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis* (Linnaeus, 1758)
114. Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata* (Linnaeus, 1776)
115. Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (Linnaeus, 1766)

**Family-Timaliinae**

116. Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* (Sykes, 1832)
117. Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus* (Dumont, 1823)

**Family- Sylviinae**

118. Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata* Sykes, 1832
119. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* (Pennant, 1769)

**Family-Muscicapinae**

120. Rusty-tailed Flycatcher *Muscicapa ruficauda* Swainson, 1838
121. Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina* (Swainson, 1838)

**Family- Monarchinae**

122. Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family- Paridae**

123. Great Tit *Parus major* Linnaeus, 1758

**Family- Nectariniidae**

124. Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica* (Latham, 1790)

Family-Zosteropidae

125. Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* (Temminck, 1824)

Family- Emberizinae

126. Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami* (Gray, 1831)

**Family- Estrildidae**

127. Spotted Munia *Lonchura punctulata* (Linnaeus, 1758)
128. Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca* (Linnaeus, 1766)

**Family- Passerinae**

129. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
130. Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis* (Burton, 1838)

**Family-Ploceinae**

131. Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar* (Horsfield, 1821)
132. Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* (Linnaeus, 1766)

**Family-Sturnidae**

133. Brahminy Starling *Sturnus pagodarum* (Gmelin, 1789)
134. Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
135. Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra* Linnaeus, 1758
136. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (Linnaeus, 1766)
137. Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus* (Latham, 1790)

**Family-Oriolidae**

138. Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (Linnaeus, 1758)
139. Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family-Dicruridae**

140. Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* Vieillot, 1817
141. White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens* (Linnaeus, 1758)

**Family-Corvidae**

142. Indian Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* (Latham, 1790)
143. House Crow *Corvus splendens* Vieillot, 1817
144. Jungle Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* Wagler, 1827

# CORRESPONDENCE

## *FIRST SIGHTING OF GREAT BITTERN (Botaurus stellaris) IN AND AROUND NORTH ORISSA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, TAKATPUR, MAYURBHANJ, ORISSA*

*by DIPANKAR LAHKAR, H. K. SAHU and S. D. ROUT. P.G. Department of Wildlife and Conservation Biology, North Orissa University, Baripada, Orissa*

During the course of our Monsoon bird study, we had the rare opportunity to observe the Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) near the North Orissa University Campus.

North Orissa University (N21$^{0}$55$^{/}$56.5$^{//}$ and E86$^{0}$44$^{/}$47.3$^{//}$) is situated 5 Km. south of the district headquarter, Baripada with large numbers of residential and Royal family planted patches of trees, tanks and paddy fields with water bodies. The area is also considered to be a fringe of Simlipal Tiger Reserve. Observations were made in the habitats such as semi urban areas, residential plots, college and university campuses, paddy fields in conjugation of a heterogeneous terrestrial plain area scattered with very small numbers of water bodies.

An individual Great Bittern (*B. stellaris*) was seen during August, 2007 on a small water body (N 21$^{0}$56$^{/}$4.6$^{//}$ and E 86$^{0}$44$^{/}$48.2$^{//}$) standing motionless on a javelin, laying on other side of the National Highway No 5 which is laid adjacent to the university. Ninety percent of the pond was covered with water hyacinth with very little open water.

According to Ali and Ripley (1983) the bird is a winter visitor to India, but most interestingly we had sighted it in the monsoon period. In Orissa, June to September is considered as the monsoon period, (Anonymous 2006). Thus this may be new information regarding its distribution. So, it would be worthwhile for the birdwatchers in Orissa, India, to lookout for this bird and provide additional information about its distributional status.

The bird was identified as Great Bittern because of its large size (larger than all other bitterns), green yellow bill, green eyes, green legs and yellow sole. It has a black crown and moustachial stripes and a black barring mantle. The chin and throat is white. No calls were recorded. The bird was observed for about three minutes at a distance of 10 feet through 8x40 binoculars. The Great Bittern was not included in the checklist of Mayurbhanj district of Orissa (Sahu and Rout, 2005). Thus this is the first record of this species in this area.

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## *SIGHTING RECORDS OF BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER (Halcyon pileata) in VIDARBHA, MAHARASHTRA,*

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On 21st April 2009, Rohit Chakravarty and Udayan Dharmadhikari were birding at Ambazari tank in the outskirts of Nagpur city. At around 07:00 hrs they located a Kingfisher. This kingfisher had a velvet black head and a prominent white collar on its hind neck. Its brilliant purple blue plumage was shining in bright sunlight. The underside was somewhat rufous or pale rusty. It perched on the ground or on small rocks and captured large insects. It neither dived into water nor hovered over water. The geographical location of Ambazari tank is 21° 7'37.90"N and 79° 2'20.24"E and the elevation is 1040 feet above sea level.

When Rohit referred the Grimmett *et. al.*'s book (2000), he was surprised to identify the kingfisher as Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*. As there are very few sightings shown in the book, he called Raju and Tarique, who rushed to the spot confirmed that it was indeed a Black-capped Kingfisher.

Incidentally, Anuj Kale, a friend and bird enthusiast from Nagpur shared a photo with Raju of a Black-capped Kingfisher taken at Ambazari tank, Nagpur on the same day i.e., on 19th April, 2009 confirming that the kingfisher was there for atleast three days. The Black-capped Kingfisher was sighted again by Raju on 26th April, 2009 at a small tank in the Central Jail premises in the heart of Nagpur city.

One more Black-capped Kingfisher was sighted and photographed by Harshawardhan Dhanwatey of the Tiger Research and Conservation Trust (TRACT) three days before, that is, on 19th April, 2009 near the backwaters of Irai dam on the outskirts of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Chandrapur district in Vidarbha. Irai dam is located 25 km north of Chandrapur city and its geographical location is 20$^{0}$09' N and 79$^{0}$18' E and the elevation is 686 feet above sea level.

Padmakar Lad along with fellow birdwatchers, namely, Manohar Khode, Vijay Ingole, and Shirishkumar Patil had sighted one Black-capped Kingfisher on 11th December 2002 at Pandhari reservoir in Warud taluq in Amravati district of Vidarbha. The geographical location of Warud town is 21°28' N and 78°16' E and the elevation is 1315 feet above sea level.

Black-capped Kingfisher was once recorded from Melghat Tiger Reserve (Kothari, 1998). It has also been sighted a few times in Nagzira wildlife sanctuary and once in Pench Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh).

Importantly, the Black-capped Kingfisher did not feature in the checklist prepared by D'Abreu (1923) which is one of the best avifaunal inventories of the Vidarbha and Madhya Pradesh.

Ali and Ripley (1987) describe the status and distribution of the Black-capped Kingfisher as: Resident and locally migratory. Primarily a maritime kingfisher, not common but frequent on the western seaboard from about Bombay southward and up the eastern coast of the peninsula through the Godavari delta, Sunderbans and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and beyond. It sporadically penetrates much deeper inland along the larger rivers and their feeders; as such collected and/ or observed in Gonda district (Uttar Pradesh), Monghyr, Madhubani, Tirhut (Bihar), Dumagudiem (Andhra), Bharatpur (Rajasthan), N. Kakhimpur (Assam), Naga Hills, North of Manipur and elsewhere.

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## *A REPORT ON THE 11TH VIDARBHA* PAKSHIMITRA SAMMELAN *HELD AT AMRAVATI*

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The 11th *Vidarbha Pakshi Mitra Sammelan* (Gathering of bird lovers of Vidarbha) was jointly organised by Wildlife and Environment Conservation Society, Amravati, Department of Zoology, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati and Indian Science Congress Association, (Amravati Chapter) on 24th and 25th April, 2010. The Sammelan was organized in the beautiful auditorium of the Amravati University. This is a concise report of the Sammelan.

The 11th *Pakshi Mitra Sammelan* was inaugurated by Principal Sharad Tankhiwale and presided over by Raju Kasambe, Manager IBA, BNHS Mumbai.

The invited guests were Prof. Dr. G. N. Vankhede (Convener Indian Science Congress, Amravati Chapter, Head of the Department of Zoology, Amravati University, Mr. Milind Chimote (Ex-Mayor, Amravati), Dr. Prabha Bhogaonkar (President, WECS and eminent Botanist), Mr. Kishor Rithe (founder Satpuda Foundation and eminent conservationist in Central India), Mr. Ramesh Ladkhedkar (pioneer of *Maharashtra Pakshimitra* movement), Dr. Jayant Wadatkar (President of the 10th Vidarbha Pakshimitra Sammelan and Secretary, WECS), Principal Dr. Shrikant Deshpande and Mr. Ganesh Halkare.

The inaugural session saw the release of the publication of souvenir named '*Ranvedh*' and felicitations of birdwatchers and naturalists. A photo exhibition of renowned nature photographers in Vidarbha, viz., Mr. C. R. Shelare, Mr. Vilas Deshmukh and Mr. M.S.R. Shad and other amateur bird photographers from Vidarbha was also arranged.

The Sammelan saw a series of lectures and PowerPoint presentations besides an open discussion on the birds and issues related to the Sammelan. Mr. Kishor Rithe guided the audience on bird study and the conservation of Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*). Dr. Pravin Bankar presented his views on the veterinary perspectives of birds. Kaustubh Pandharipande guided the birders about his work on Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indica*) with the help of Pardhi community. Dr. G. A. Wagh gave a presentation on his findings on the Malabar Pied Hornbills (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) in Melghat. Raju Kasambe spoke on general aspects besides his doctoral thesis on the Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyceros birostris*) and on the endangered Birds in Vidarbha. Prof. Nishikant Kale dealt on the issues relating to Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) in Melghat.

Rajkamal Job shared his experiences of birding in United States of America. Yadav Tarte described the issue of poaching of birds in Amravati. Prof. Sachin Tayade gave an illustrated talk on nesting materials. Some students of the department of Zoology, Amravati University had prepared artificial nest boxes for House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) from the rubbish. These were on display. Dr. G. T. Kedar presented a talk on birdwatching skills and offered very useful tips to birdwatchers.

More than 200 bird lovers and scientists participated in this *Pakshimitra Sammelan*. Some resolutions were passed during the Sammelan out of which one is: We request and recommend the Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) to be declared as the state bird of Maharshtra in place of the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicopterus*).

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## OBITUARY NOTE

***REMEMBERING HUSSAIN BHAI**, by Prof. H.S.A. YAHYA, Dept. of Wildlife Sciences, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh - 202 002.*

In the passing away of Mr. Sayed Abdullah Hussain, whom I affectionately used to call Hussain Bhai (elder brother), India has lost one of the most knowledgeable ornithologists and a very refined human being. My acquaintance with Hussain Bhai goes back to three decades. I first met him on July 14, 1977 at the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) a day after I was accepted as an apprentice (and subsequently a Ph.D. student) of late Dr. Salim Ali under the aegis of the Society. Hussain Bhai was very cordial and gave me several useful tips on bird watching and explained the use of reference material on birds in the Society's Bird Room. Subsequently the affinity grew and he invited me to his residence in Buyculla Railway Colony where he used to stay with his elder sister and brother in-law the late Munir Bhai. The Hussains belonged to a noble family of Karkala village near Mangalore in the state of Karnataka. His father was a law graduate from Aligarh Muslim University who had established a first of its kind bank in the state. Gradually Munir Bhai's residence became my frequent Sunday evenings destination where I used to watch Hindi movies on Doordarshan and dine with the family. They were very affectionate and humble people.

Hussain Bhai did not have a formal degree in Zoology or natural history. But by virtue of his observant aptitude and his prolonged association with Dr. Salim Ali, he acquired great expertise in the field so much so that Dr. Salim Ali used to consider him a great scientist. He began his career as a field assistant and then held several higher positions in the Society. He had excellent public relation skills and the growth of the Society as a first class field-based study centre between 1975 and 1990 was largely due to his foresight, meticulous planning, project writing abilities and his capacity to generate funds. Hussain Bhai was instrumental in bringing several big research projects to the Society under the Principal Leadership of Dr. Salim Ali and worked as Principal Investigator of Avifauna Project. He was an excellent field worker and always gave us the most logical explanations to our queries on ringing, migration and other behavioural aspects of birds. After completing my Ph. D. in 1980, I worked in various BNHS projects under Hussain Bhai's leadership and they were the most formative years for me. During this period, I was exposed to the finer points of avian study and I learned how to maintain a low profile while interacting with various people, how to maintain a good public relation during bird surveys, and so on.

Hussain Bhai served Dr. Salim Ali with his heart and soul for over four decades. Once he got a lucrative job offer from Tiger Tops in Nepal and left the Society but returned to BNHS within a few months. I was then conducting my field work in Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala and wrote to him asking why he left such a good position. He wrote back: "Dear Yahya, thanks for your concern on my leaving a good job but you know my father died when I was only a minor and in serving Dr. Salim Ali I always consider I am serving my father. Therefore, so far he is alive, I will not leave the Society". I was amazed at his response. He had immense regard and affection for Dr. Salim Ali. True to his words, Hussain Bhai served Dr. Salim Ali, arranged his field trips and served him day and night until the grand old man breathed his last in the lap of Hussain Bhai. It is extremely rare for an unrelated person to display such a strong affection and long lasting bond.

Based on his insight and excellent field knowledge, Hussain Bhai published a number of scientific papers, project reports and booklets. But perhaps his main contribution to Indian ornithology is training a score of budding ornithologists who later became experts in their own right. He organized a Research Training Camp in Point Calimare (TN) in 1980 which has now been upgraded and better established. Considering Hussain Bhai's pioneering contribution to this Centre, his admirable services to BNHS and his contribution to Indian ornithology, I strongly recommend that this Centre should be named as S.A. Hussain Centre for Avian Research. Hussain Bhai has made tremendous contribution to the study and research of birds in India and we must pay homage to his work and personality by facilitating creation of Avian Research Fund in his name.

Mr. Hussain worked in Malaysia for about eight years in Malaya University wetland section. He was the coordinator of Asian Wetland Bureau and was also associated with Birdlife International and International Ornithological Congress on various capacities.

After active services he opened an NGO in Mangalore and kept on contributing for Indian Ornithology. He drafted the by-laws and policies of Ornithological Federation of India which is yet to take a formal identity. He was a member of several state level and central government statutory bodies dealing with waterfowl and wetlands. I have had the opportunity of conducting wetland/waterfowl surveys in the country and attending meetings together.

Even after leaving the BNHS, I kept regular contact with him and invited him to our department on several occasions. During his stay in the AMU he always gave us good advices for the development of the department. He was very friendly to our former Chairman the late Prof. Abbas Musavi as well as to our ex-V. C Dr. Mahmoodur Rahman. With the sad demise of Mr. Hussain I have lost a very sincere and elderly friend, philosopher and guide. I humbly pray for his soul to rest in peace.

**Front Cover :** 1. Red-whiskered Bulbul *(Pycnonotus jocosus)*, 2. Common Kestrel *(Falco tinnunculus)*, 3. Bay-backed Shrike *(Lanius vittatus)*, 4. Sykes's Crested Lark *(Galerida deva)*, 5. White-throated Munia *(Lonchura malabarica)*. All photoghraps by **Shivadarshan Balse**